

Insights Inside.

**RCB**

# **Post -Tsunami Voice of the Community Leaders**

## **The Report**

**For  
Sarvodaya**

**By  
Research Consultancy Bureau**

**October 2005**

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## ABSTRACT

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This research is a study of post-Tsunami community through voices of formal and informal community leaders. The study discusses the impact of the 100/200metre rule in the economic and social context. Instead of the commonly used approach of survey methods in understanding trends and attitudes, the study used qualitative methodologies as a form of retrospective and prospective analysis of comments by modified focus groups. The findings, therefore, explain how actions of decision-makers, providers of assistance and receivers have affected the post-Tsunami situation in the East and South as at August 2005. The research draws attention to the manner in which the rule is imposed and how it has impacted on the livelihood of the people. Further it gives possible answers to lesser economic development in the areas affected by the Tsunami. Finally the research discusses change in value system in the community and accountability of providers of assistance.

## SECTION A

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### 1.0 Background

Sarvodaya is a Sri Lankan organization developed around a set of coherent philosophical tenets drawn from Buddhism and Gandhian thought, and has been in operation for almost 50 years. Sarvodaya is Sri Lanka's largest and most broadly embedded people's organization, with a network of 15,000 villages, 34 district offices, over 100,000 youth, and the country's largest micro-credit organization with a cumulative loan portfolio of over LKR one billion.

No sooner the Tsunami disaster news reached its headquarters in Moratuwa on Sunday December 26, 2004, Sarvodaya established a special Disaster Management Operations. Since then Sarvodaya is actively involved in rebuilding programs.

This is how the founder of Sarvodaya Dr A T Ariyaratne explained the vision to rebuild Sri Lanka:

“What remains to be done is not simply building a house for those which have been flattened, or re-building the roads and rail tracks which have been badly damaged, or re-establishing the social welfare services such as health and education, or re-starting the commercial activities needed for the daily life of the people, but to do all these and much more as well, within a sustained national effort to build a new country; a NEW SRI LANKA.

Sarvodaya believes and acts on the belief that the country needs a VISION which not only motivates ALL of us but also directs all efforts at Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, Reconciliation and Reawakening (5R) whether by individuals, societies, state, private sector or Non Governmental Organizations, international agencies, etc. Sarvodaya believes that to move towards this VISION of Beyond Immediate Relief, the whole country, and not only those immediately families should get involved”.

Sarvodaya has already commissioned the National Re-Awakening Council to formulate such a Vision.

To complement this thinking Sarvodaya presently wishes to develop its capabilities in becoming the most sought after “Voice of the community on economic, governance, social and social accountability issues” by leveraging the capabilities of village level community network base, and district level coordinators and district level organizations.

Sarvodaya is interested in obtaining the voice of the community leaders to explore the following.

- Community impacting challenges and issues - immediately before and after Tsunami and what actions seen as right/wrong and learning points for the future (the level of preparedness, government support and facilitation, action strategies)
- Challenges and recommendations on policies, implementation actions and governance framework of rehabilitation and resettlement of the affected community
- Community recommendations on the best strategy for implementation of an all hazard warning system involving the community participative action

To *facilitate* this exploration **Sarvodaya** requested **Research Consultancy Bureau** to conduct a research study. This document pertains to the findings of the study.

## 2.0 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research is to explore community leaders' retrospective and prospective views on Tsunami devastation and reconstruction, on economic, governance, social and social accountability of the community in the light 100/200metre rule.

The following information areas were covered in the process of exploration:

- Socio-economic and psychosocial life in general, just before Tsunami
- Experience/comments on preventive measures/communication when Tsunami occurred, if any.
- Experience of Tsunami – Self and others in general (an emotional gratification)
- Role performed by the leader in the community on rescue and relief operations
- Change in leaders' role since Tsunami and his/her current activities
- Leaders' perception of community needs on rehabilitation-reconstruction and reasons for proposals
- Manner in which the community needs were categorized and rationalized
- Challenges faced/yet to face to meet needs of the community
- Achievements and failures in the process and reasons
- Leaders interaction with state/non-state institutions since Tsunami to fulfill community services
- Perceived expectations and strengths/weaknesses with regard to interaction with the state/non-state institutions
- Suggestions to improve/overcome difficulties with state/non-state interactions
- Leaders' perception about Tsunami related national issues
- Leaders' views on local issues in the national context
- Policies need to be changed to address Tsunami related national issues and how they affect local need fulfillment
- Expected role to resolve Tsunami-related national issues
- Views about recommendations of hazard warning system as a community participative action

- Views about post Tsunami life on following:
  - Epidemics
  - Mental illnesses
  - Religiosity
  - Voodoo craft (supernatural beliefs)
  - Alcoholism/Drug abuse
  - Sex abuse
  - Crime
- Perceptions on administrative authority
- Views of the community with regard to handling of Tsunami devastation
- Post Tsunami thoughts of leaders and future of Sri Lanka

### **3.0 Research Design and Methodology**

A restriction-free research approach in the form of retrospective and prospective story telling has been adopted in this survey. Further, since there is a need to have a clear distinction between facts (experiences) and opinions (views), the design of the research did not impose an artificial structure (Smith DVL and Fletcher JF 2001) in data gathering, but, used a technique that reflects the observations made rather than distorting data to fit an inappropriate predetermined structure. Hence, the design of research is based on '**grounded theory**' (Glaser B and Strauss A 1967).

Further, the study used a **qualitative research** design to address methodological aspects of the research. The design comprised of **Mini focus groups** (Smith DVL and Fletcher JF 2001) where selected leaders of a particular community attended the discussion together. Number of community leaders in a group is limited to four to have the desired cohesiveness or diversity. The informants (community leaders) were drawn from formal and informal channels to obtain spread of views. The analytic technique is based on display matrices (Miles and Huberman 1994). The analysis is made by predefined community groups to achieve the desired objective and by evolved aspects from the research.

#### **3.1 Target Informant**

The target informant is the community leader who has direct experience with the Tsunami devastation at the relief and reconstruction stage.

(S)He represents the views of the community and has the ability to influence the decision process on activities for the community.

The community leader can be a person who has either been formally appointed by the state or commanded leadership in his or her actions in the relief and reconstruction process.

### 3.2 Group Composition

A total of **6 modified focus groups** were conducted in six localities among young and mature leaders as given below:

#### East

<b>Group 1 Vahrai</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Age</b>
	Field officer (NGO)	GCE (O/L)	36 (F)
	Principal	Trained	36 (M)
	Fisherman	Grade 5	37 (M)
	Grama Sevaka**	GCE (A/L)	26 (M)

<b>Group 2 Kathankudy</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Age</b>
	Clerk	GCE (A/L)	40 (M)
	Grama Sevaka	GCE (A/L)	35 (M)
	University Student*	GCE (A/L)	29 (M)
	Sports Officer	GCE (A/L)	31 (M)

<b>Group 3 Kaluwachikudy</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Age (Gender)</b>
	Businessman	GCE (O/L)	48 (M)
	Jeweler	GCE (O/L)	45 (M)
	Cultivator	GCE (O/L)	46 (M)
	Gramasevaka	GCE (O/L)	58 (M)

#### South

<b>Group 4 Koggala</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Age (Gender)</b>
	Cultivator	GCE (A/L)	45 (M)
	Social Service	GCE (O/L)	33 (F)
	State officer	Graduate	27 (F)
	Head Priest	Post Graduate	56 (M)

<b>Group 5 Unawatuna</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Age (Gender)</b>
	Business (Fish)	GCE (O/L)	41 (M)
	Business (Veg)	GCE (O/L)	32 (M)
	Marriage Registrar	GCE (A/L)	31 (F)
	Social Service	GCE (A/L)	27 (F)

<b>Group 6 Hikkaduwa</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Age (Gender)</b>
	Retired State Officer	GCE (A/L)	61 (M)
	Grama Sevaka	GCE (A/L)	48 (M)
	Retired Mercantile	GCE (A/L)	60 (M)
	House wife*	Grade 8	55 (F)

\* Did not attend

\*\* Grama Sevaka or GS is the representative of the Divisional Secretariat in the village.

### 3.3 *Field Work and Interviews*

Trained recruiters of Sarvodaya carried out the recruitment of informants. They were trained by RCB staff on the study objective and were given a recruitment guideline according to the above criteria.

The discussions were conducted at a place convenient to the informant or at a pre-arranged setting. Each discussion was tape recorded to capture all possible information.

The discussions were conducted from 7<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> of August 2005. Post analysis in-depth interviews were conducted in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> week of October.

### 3.4 *Analytic technique*

Miles and Huberman (1994) explain that “The researcher attempts to capture data on the perception of the local actor from the inside through a process of deep attentiveness, empathetic understanding (Verstehen), and of suspending or bracketing preconceptions about the topics under discussion.” The approach to data collection, as mentioned earlier, took the form of voice of the community as a story both retrospective and expected. Therefore the analysis looked at two different ways so as not to lose original ideas through abstraction.

One way is to look at cross-group situations to understand how the data is grouped and for what reasons. The analysis started with descriptive codes allowing natural (condition free) sorting of data (ibid). To formulate codes, repeatedly used words, nouns, noun phrases and dichotomies were identified; hence initial coding labels are the words of informants (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Sorted data was studied in depth to develop a primary set of pattern codes. Pattern codes are the informants’ statements, rooted to the original idea. These pattern codes were further improved by merging, removing or moving to different coding labels.

The other way is to keep a track of the individual group to have a deeper understanding of cross group data in answer to most of how/what questions. The development of group order analysis at an early stage helped to rank pattern codes by the strength of the comment of a number of groups. Based on data structure, definitions were composed for each final pattern code to keep consistency in interpretations throughout the study.

When variable cells are not ratifying group order cells, they are corrected, modified or discarded. Once an idea can be moved forward and back explaining by group, analytic summary was developed.

*Qualitative analysis software was used for this analysis.*

## 4.0 **Limitations**

The research design has limitations when generalizing to the population. It is recommended that the findings be taken as **indicative** and not as **directive**.

## **SECTION B**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **1.0 ROLE OF THE LEADER**

The leaders' contribution towards the community during and after the Tsunami devastation was taken into consideration when selecting leaders for the research. Hence there was a mix of formally and informally appointed leaders. At the recruitment stage an emphasis was made to recruit community leaders who have commanded respect as a result of their actions.

#### **1.1 Leadership Activities carried out**

Activities of the community leaders depict their involvement in mere operational tasks to counseling, conducting meetings to manage activities, get assistance from state officials, NGO's and others, preparation of documents to register community members, fair distribution of aid, getting aid to most deserving persons, organize school and educational programs and directing special attention to old and pregnant women. It is a full-time involvement, which can be, carried out only by a selected few. The research identified four characteristics common to most of the community leaders.

Firstly, the ability to communicate -

Community leaders were good communicators and were able to clearly communicate the needs of the community to officials of the State and private sector. In some situations their leadership character was initiated through this skill. Further being able to understand and speak in English is seen as a way to command respect among the community.

Secondly, the genuine interest of the community -

Community leaders also displayed their genuine interest to lead the community. Some have taken respective communities as their responsibility and presently doing everything possible to get best assistance to their people.

Thirdly, the determination to get back to pre-Tsunami life -

Although some community leaders were keen to get back to pre-Tsunami life, their work made it necessary for them to do it through the community. Thus they were compelled to get involved in rehabilitating and reconstruction programs. This aspect was seen mostly among the fishing community.

Fourthly, the understanding of State practices -

Being able to understand the mechanism of the State machinery is also seen as a way to initiate leadership. This is a situation with Grama Sevakas where their formal leadership is enhanced due to various requests of the community. A few other retired State employees too are familiar with the State machinery.

Hence, in addition to formal leadership, several informal leaders have taken serious interest to lead respective communities.

## **2.0 RETROSPECTIVE AND PROSPECTIVE VIEWS OF RECONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES OF TSUNAMI**

As per the objective, the research was designed to obtain views of the community leaders reflecting the activities as at today. As described in Section 1 above, the community leaders were directly involved in various stages of the post Tsunami activities hence their views are considered as congruent to the views of the community.

Discussions were carried out both one-to-one and as groups focusing on concerns of the current status of Tsunami devastation. Frequently commented concerns by the leaders were:

- 100/200metre rule
- Housing
- Occupation/ employment
- Infrastructure
- Change in value system
- Education (less)
- Health (less)

Comments were largely similar by geographic area, ethnicity or age. Any observable differences are mentioned in the report appropriately.

### **2.1 100 / 200 Metre Rule**

Even though community leaders' comments emphasised housing as a priority, the reconstruction of housing is subject to where the communities are located. Hence community leaders displayed serious attention to legal, perceptual and practical aspects about the rule. In this respect comments made have some differences between East and South.

Community leaders of the East believe that the 200metre rule was imposed by the Government for the goodness of the people for the protection of life and property. This view was not strongly seen by the leaders of the South. However, in both East and South some were of the view that there is an ulterior motive with regard to the implementation of the rule.

The opinions and reasons given by the community leaders, to bring in such a rule are indicated below:

East

- Inability of the Government to spend again for reconstruction activities
- Doubt about getting international support in case of another Tsunami
- Responsibility of the Government to look into the welfare of the people
- Possibility of less damage to lives and property
- To develop the lands for agriculture and/or tourism

- To be used as a foreign exchange earner
- Due to opinion of experts – Tsunami is more harmful if living within 100/200metres

#### South

- Expect more Tsunamis to come in the near future
- Once the rule is implemented, the State can escape from the responsibility of looking after people if another Tsunami occurs
- To build more attractive highways
- Trying to implement a rule that was neglected for sometime
- To make coastal belt more attractive to foreigners
- To use the area for tourism
- A mechanism for the State to own private property

*“We don’t know what the Government has in mind but looking at what happened we see that most of those who lived within 200m are dead... those who lived away had the opportunity of escaping, their property is damaged but life was saved... so it could be to reduce the damage to lives” – East*

*“They might also be having an idea of using the coast for tourism and if people are living it could be disturbing... could be planning for a foreign exchange earning activity- East / South*

*“They wanted to broaden the road and to make it look nice.... when foreigners come it looks nice.... Sri Lanka will be a tourist attraction... They made this a reason for it” - South*

#### Perceptions in Favour of 100/200metre Rule

It could be seen that the rule has implications of both sincere and not so sincere intentions of the Government. With this view in mind community leaders of both the East and the South commented aspects that were favorable to the rule and made an attempt to justify the course of action taken by the Government.

People are terrified of experiencing another Tsunami in the near future. This is seen among both the children and the adults. However adults were reluctant to disclose this fear (See Section B, 2.5).

Genuine belief that houses beyond 100/200 metres away from the sea would have reduced the number of deaths.

Looking forward to own two properties with relocation programs. Once relocated people expect to use the previous land for cultivation, business, continue the industry/occupation and/or to sell.

Expecting economic benefits by providing support services to development activities planned by the State.

Expect the relocation to be better in prospects than the pre-Tsunami community of which they were not satisfied. The reasons for un-satisfactoriness were based on caste, alcoholism, robberies and crime in the locality.

Those who had financial and occupational issues in pre-Tsunami expect better prospects to start life afresh in relocation.

Those who commented in favor of the rule discussed the concern of children, mitigation of future disasters, means of developing agriculture and programs of the Government to develop tourism. In this regard, the wisdom displayed by the community leaders of the East was greater than in the South, as they have experienced a similar devastation in 1978 due to a cyclone. Hence favorable comments for the rule were limited amongst the community leaders in the South.

*“People are scared... especially the small children scream when they see the sea... they say they cannot stay...therefore those people asked for a house away from the sea... but it need to be a permanent house” - East/South*

*“The first tide has gone beyond 300m.... so they are thinking of people who live beyond 200m... they can see when the tide is coming and there is time for them to escape and save their lives... if it is within 200m the time is not enough to run away” - East*

*“It is not just surface water.... It came from deep within the sea and therefore it dug the houses off the ground’ - East*

*“Some people live by breaking corals... that is very bad as it can harm the beach.... That is a concern to implement some ruling... that is one of the reasons Tsunami was able to get into the interior” - South*

#### Perceptions Against the 100 / 200 metre Rule

Those who commented against the rule were critical about the intentions of the Government for its partiality, impracticality, lack of transparency and lack of consideration with regard to livelihood, occupation, education, trade etc.

Their concerns were drawn on the following:

Inability of the Government to find a land close to the center of activities of the community. The community leaders believe that the relocation to be done in such a manner that it has to be compatible with respective industries, community, culture (religious, ethnic and other), and lifestyles.

Inability of the Government to find schools for the children of the community. The key concern was the possibility of losing the opportunity of getting the child selected to an urban school on the distance criteria, which had been planned years in advance. Losing the benefits of being a citizen of the municipal council is also seen as a concern in this respect.

Need greater preparation to get to their jobs due to distance, which the community is not willing to go through, especially the fisher folk.

It is also believed that the houses and other properties, which were well-built sustained the Tsunami. Leaders questioned the need of moving to a new location and rebuild life once again. Further, there is a high reluctance to move out of the property with substantial ancestry and sentiments.

The communities have undergone physical and mental hardships since Tsunami, which they had never experienced before. With those emotional disturbances the communities were unable to set their minds to cope up with relocation and related activities.

With regard to the distance, community leaders are questioning the subjectivity and relativity of the distance decided by the Government. The subjectivity is seen in the manner in which distance is measured with questionable transparency. The relativity is a random justification given by the Government that beyond 100/200 metres is safe for the community. Hence they questioned the scientific evidence to justify the distance.

Community leaders drew attention to the Pereliya rail disaster and questioned whether the distance could be justified with the highway and rail tracks along the coastline. In addition, community leaders believe that people are not used to lonely roads and rail tracks without inhabitants on either side. Hence they believe that it is unsafe to travel on deserted road tracks.

The communities are concerned with the relocation in terms of compatibility of social class, income opportunities and convenience, to make the livelihood as close as possible to pre-Tsunami days. Further indecisiveness of the Government with regard to the rule has prevented enterprising community members to rebuild their businesses by using their land as collateral to obtain loans from the banks.

*“... Especially the fishermen... because of their trade they need to live close to the sea... and take care of their belongings.... If not they will be robbed.....” - East / South*

*“My question is, if one can build the house at 101m point, what difference it makes from being within the 100m if and when a tsunami comes...it doesn't stop at 100m. I don't think it is a wise act for a country like Sri Lanka.... only from that one cannot bring total protection. I don't think it will bring expected results – South / East*

## Misconceptions

The comments above imply certain misconceptions. The impact with regard to these misconceptions and perceived division of the community due to 100/200metre rule has adversely affected the trust on the Government.

The community leaders identified the situations that have led to misconceptions and requested the Government to communicate clearly on following aspects:

- Point from which the 100/200metre is measured
- Methods used to demarcate boundaries
- Ways to avoid preferential treatment when measuring the distance
- Transparency of the decision if the distance is differed in a particular situation
- Directive given by the Government to compensate house owners within the rule
- The amounts already paid and to be paid as compensation for the houses within the rule
- Possibility of the distance to come down to 35metres (See Appendix 6)
- Reason for receiving letters informing not to build houses vs. rule being taken off
- Allowing to build houses within the buffer zone if the area is three metres high
- Reasons for inability of the Government to implement one policy in all areas

The measurement of the 100 /200 metre has led to controversy, as the distance from the sea-line as defined in the Act has not been carried out. People believe that the Government has considered the political advantage more than adhering to the provisions of the Act (See Appendix 1).

*“For about 4 months they couldn’t mark where the 100 metre was... sometimes they say it is here and then again mark it at a different place... Only after the Vesak Poya (May) they marked the correct place.... Those who came to help said that we are within the 100 metre and went away”*

*- South*

*“The boundary of the beach is the point where the tide struck on the beach; I think the 100m is taken from there. No one knows the correct point” – East*

*“That problem remains the same. They are not allowed even to put up a tent... We also cannot trust their demarcation... it differs according to their interests” - South*

*“What the government says today is not what they are going to say tomorrow... That is similar to the amount of money they give. There should be a national policy... 15 districts faced the tsunami...all should hear the same thing... it is a matter of sending the same circular to every one” - South*

### Visible Division of the Community

Indecisiveness of the Government on the rule has resulted an implicit division of the community when seeking benefits or assistance. Hence community leaders experienced unpleasantness and lack of trust among the members. Accordingly, there is lesser association with the communities who are within the 100/200metre rule as they are categorized as not being eligible for benefits. If they are taken into the societies (*samiti*) formed for the purpose of claiming assistance, there is a belief that all will lose assistance from the aid organizations. Explanation given by the people is that such members do not have approved land or house to make a claim. In this context, there is now an informal division in society which is seen to be discriminated in the following manner:

#### *Developed / less developed -*

The visible and actual development has taken place in the areas beyond 100/200 metres. Hence communities are divided by the degree of development according to the locality.

*“More development activities have taken place for those who are living away from the buffer zone” – South*

#### *Accepted / not accepted -*

Those who are beyond 100/200 metres are reluctant to accept members who are within the zone. Hence society is seemingly divided into an accepted group and a non-accepted group.

*“Those who lived within 100m was less accepted in the community as they were treated as non receivers of aid” - South*

#### *Privileged / less privileged -*

Those who are truly affected by the Tsunami were not in a mindset to seek assistance as they were recovering a traumatic experience. Those who were less or non-affected had the presence of mind to obtain benefits and assistance wisely. As a result such groups became more privileged with necessities and luxuries. Some even had taken benefits of others, as intended members (within the zone) were either not interested or did not have the means to establish their claims. In most cases, communities who were less affected were the groups who were beyond 100/200metre rule.

*“Some didn’t show much interest on aid as they have lost family members, because of this others had the chance to get their share also” - South*

Fortunate / not so fortunate -

Since the government requested not to build structures within 100/200 metres the resultant communities were living in temporary houses. Hence they were not fortunate enough to collect and keep free flow of consumer items and other goods.

*“Because we were living in camps we were unable to take anything, even if we did, there was no room for us to keep them” - East*

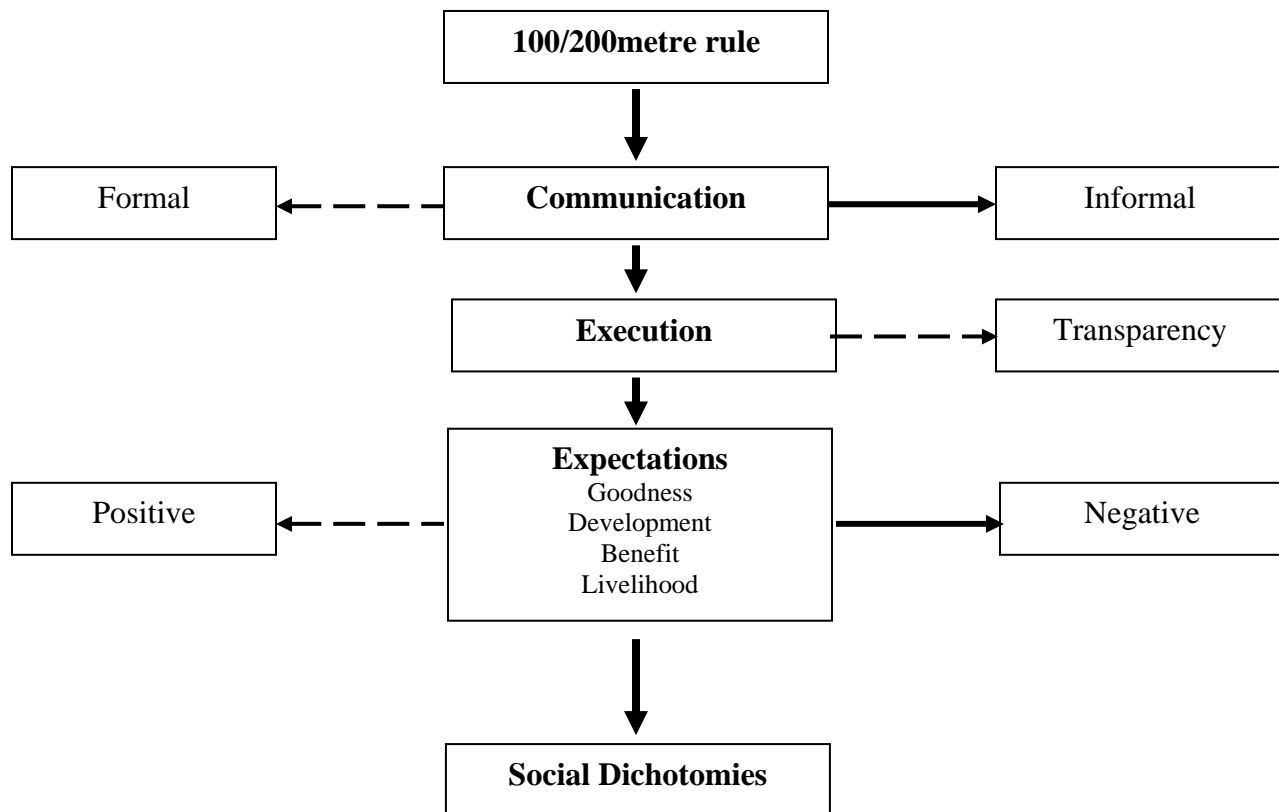
Haves / Have nots -

The communities who lived beyond 100/200metre zone claimed and got substantial financial assistance to rebuild their houses. This has enabled such communities to show a visible point of difference to those who have not received.

*“1-2 ½ lakhs was not given to those who live within 100m as they don't have a land to build the house” – South*

*“We have not recovered yet... very soon we may be working for those who are living 100 metres away from the sea. We may become a driver of their van or car” – South*

## Voice 1 – 100/200metre Rule



The overview of comments with regard to 100/200metre rule could be seen as the manner in which the rule was communicated and implemented. It seems a larger proportion of communication is through informal channels, which had left room for misunderstanding and misconceptions at the level of the recipients. This situation has not improved at the stage of executing the rule where communities questioned transparency.

The expectations of the communities with regard to the rule are based on derived **goodness, development, benefit** expectations and desired **livelihood**. In this context there seems to be high negativity among the community and has led to social dichotomies.

## 2.2 Housing

The 100/200metre rule and its implications on the community, discussed earlier, raises a concern about the post-Tsunami housing, especially among the communities within 100 /200metre rule and beyond. This section initially discusses how communities have perceived the housing aspect and the standpoint of the Government. Based on these viewpoints the research looked at the current status from the community leaders' point of view.

The immediate need of shelter was provided through schools, temples and churches. Subsequently temporary shelters were provided with tents and semi-permanent structures. There were two schools of thought in this regard where some believed that semi-permanent structures were too costly and therefore it had delayed the permanent construction of houses while others were of the view that it was needed to avoid going through greater difficulties in temporary shelters which would have caused serious health concerns and epidemics.

The understanding of the community on receiving a house was two fold. Some were of the opinion that the Divisional Secretariat is providing a complete house with necessary facilities, i.e. water, electricity, and toilet, while others were of the view that the houses would be provided independently by voluntary and International charitable organizations. The communities were also aware that they would not be receiving money to build the house on their own. To some community leaders, providing of houses depended solely on the political situation in the country; hence people are keen to receive a house through any means.

The communities within the 100/200 metre rule either expected or received houses valued as follows:

<b>Value</b>	<b>Given by</b>
Rs 500,000	Divisional Secretariat
Rs 500,000	NGO
Rs 650,000 – 850,000	NGO

As per the report of IPS (Institute of Policy Studies), the guidelines given by the TAFREN are as follows:

The key observations are that communities within the zone cannot build houses and they will not need to declare an ownership of land to be eligible for housing. Irrespective of the type of house and social class, the community members will receive a house of 500 square feet with electricity, water, sanitation and drainage facilities.

The excerpt of TAFREN guideline is given below:

RELOCATION OF HOUSEHOLDS WHOSE DAMAGED HOUSES LIE WITHIN THE BUFFER ZONE

In the buffer zone where construction is not allowed, according to TAFREN guidance of 15 March 2005 the Government “will identify land closest to the affected village and provide houses to the affected families. As far as possible, the relocation process will attempt to keep communities in tact”.

The following assistance policy will apply to households within the buffer zone:

- No reconstruction of houses (partially or fully damaged) will be allowed within the buffer zone.
- All affected households will be provided with a house built with donor assistance on land allocated by the state. Households will not be required to demonstrate ownership to land
- The new homes will be built in line with guidelines issued by the UDA and will have a floor area of 500sq.ft. and would be provided with electricity, running water, sanitation and drainage facilities.
- The proposed houses in urban and rural settlements will have facilities such as road systems, recreation etc.

Comparatively the communities who are living beyond 100/200 metres were able (as mentioned in Section B, 2.1) to fulfil their housing needs somewhat speedily and effectively. According to community leaders, some received assistance in proportion to the size of the damage whilst others received pre-defined housing similar to communities within the 100/200 metres. Thus assistance received were both in cash and kind.

The assistance received can be broken down as:

<b>Value of house</b>	<b>Given by</b>
100,000 - 250,000	Government
100,000 - 150,000	Government
200,000	Presidential Secretariat
100,000 - 200,000	NGO / Private organization / foreigners

As per the report of IPS (Institute of Policy Studies) the guidelines of assistance provided for communities living beyond 100/200 metres as given by the TAFREN is as follows:

The key observation of TAFREN guidelines is that there is requirement of demonstration of ownership of land and assistance to be based on the estimation of the damage.

The excerpt of TAFREN guideline is given below:

### REBUILDING PERMANENT HOUSES FOR THOSE LOCATED OUTSIDE THE BUFFER ZONE

The Government has agreed to provide grants and loans for households outside the zone to rebuild, funded by the World Bank and Swiss Development Corporation.

According to TAFREN guidance of 15 March 2005 the following will apply to households outside the buffer zone:

All affected households outside the buffer zone that are able to demonstrate ownership of land will be entitled to a grant by the State. Households that do not have ownership to the land are not entitled to this assistance.

<b>Extent of damage</b>	<b>Fully damaged</b>	<b>Partially damaged</b>
Definition	Repair cost is more than 40% of replacement cost of house	Repair cost is less than 40% of replacement cost of house
Assistance policy	Grant of Rs.250,000 disbursed in four stages	Grant of Rs.100,000 disbursed in two stages

In addition, households that have successfully utilized the grant will be eligible to apply for a concessionary loan of Rs.500,000. The loan will be disbursed through the Bank of Ceylon and People's Bank. The borrower will have to demonstrate repayment capacity and offer security acceptance to the lending institution. The participatory bodies will publish the details of this loan scheme.

Housing is an area much discussed by the community leaders. The comments reflected the personal requirement of some leaders but mostly expressed views of the community. The following aspects are noteworthy indications for the leaders to have greater attention to housing:

- Shelter (Housing) is seen as a primary need after food.
- Difficulty in making a serious decision due to high cost involvement
- Difficulty of meeting individual needs with the value of assistance given
- Location of housing (implicit division by the rule is discussed in detail in Section B, 2.1)
- Interest shown by some to keep the damaged house as a means to obtain more assistance
- A way to demonstrate the contribution by the Government, NGO or other groups to the public

The reconstruction of housing therefore is symbolic to community members and institutions that provide assistance. In this context housing is seen as one of the most criticised areas of post-Tsunami activities. Reasons for such criticism can be seen in three ways:

1. Degree to which assistance is received
2. Degree to which the problem of housing is understood by the provider
3. Concerns with the process of construction

Almost all community leaders were thankful to non-governmental organisations, individuals and, to some extent, to the State for their generosity in providing housing needs. Yet they questioned the prevalence of temporary houses even after seven months of Tsunami. They have commented that the work completed so far was less than 50%. This has led to substantial displeasure among the communities. The situation has worsened when communities found out that some families who were registered as a single family before the Tsunami were now eligible to obtain two separate houses having registered as two families. Further, those who had wattle and daub or temporary houses have obtained brick and mortar houses. The concern is on the disparity of provision of assistance and transparency, integrity and fairness.

*“The NGOs have informed that a temporary house would cost between Rs.65, 000-85,000 but within these 7 months not even a temporary house was built. Within this period they could have built at least a single room” -East*

*“Some have lost houses worth Rs.500,000/- ... for some it is less and for some it is more... but the government without taking these into consideration has given equal amounts” – East*

*“The correct statistics of people affected were not provided... or even the number of houses damaged... at various times various statistics were given with the result there was no proper planning - East*

*“Those who didn’t have a proper house, now has a house. They have got a better status...” – South*

Tsunami has devastated communities regardless of individual status, but subsequent relief and reconstruction programmes have created -

- Visible discrimination with some communities receiving less than others or less than what they used to have.
- Visible benefits for those who had less earlier now having more.

Both seem to have created social disharmony leading to un-satisfactoriness.

*“Some houses were actually not broken but they looked broken because they were old... people from Presidential Secretariat said if you like, you can break this house... we can pass 2 lakhs for you to build a house... so the people who liked it agreed to break the house... now they have 2 lakhs in their savings as a NGO had promised to build a house and had asked them to save the money” – South*

*“Some who lost their houses were given 50,000 rupees. If a family member was dead, 15,000/- was given; there was also a monthly payment of Rs.5000 per family. Some have got all these even without facing the Tsunami. Those who have faced Tsunami haven’t got anything” – East*

The community leaders questioned whether the State, NGO or individuals truly understood the idea of housing needs in the local context. They believe that once a permanent house is provided it should last for generations. They believe that a house should be at a locality where domiciles should be able to live a decent and comfortable life and be able to carry out their day-to-day activities similar to pre-Tsunami days. Further, the design of the house should conform to the respective culture and value system of the community. Hence fulfilment of a housing need is not a brick and mortar structure but a place for livelihood. Therefore, community leaders request that those who design houses for Tsunami affected people, should have this view.

*“NGO together with a man is cheating money. If the house is costing 5 lakhs they try to finish the house by spending 2 lakhs building a very low quality house using low quality, cheap bricks and timber that will not withstand a Tsunami at all” – South*

*“Need to do a research at village level and understand what really people need? NGOs work from Colombo and get the house done with toilets inside the house similar to toilets in the city... they forget that this is a house in the village. These people are not used to having a toilet inside the house. They are used to going to the thicket or to some place in the vicinity” – East*

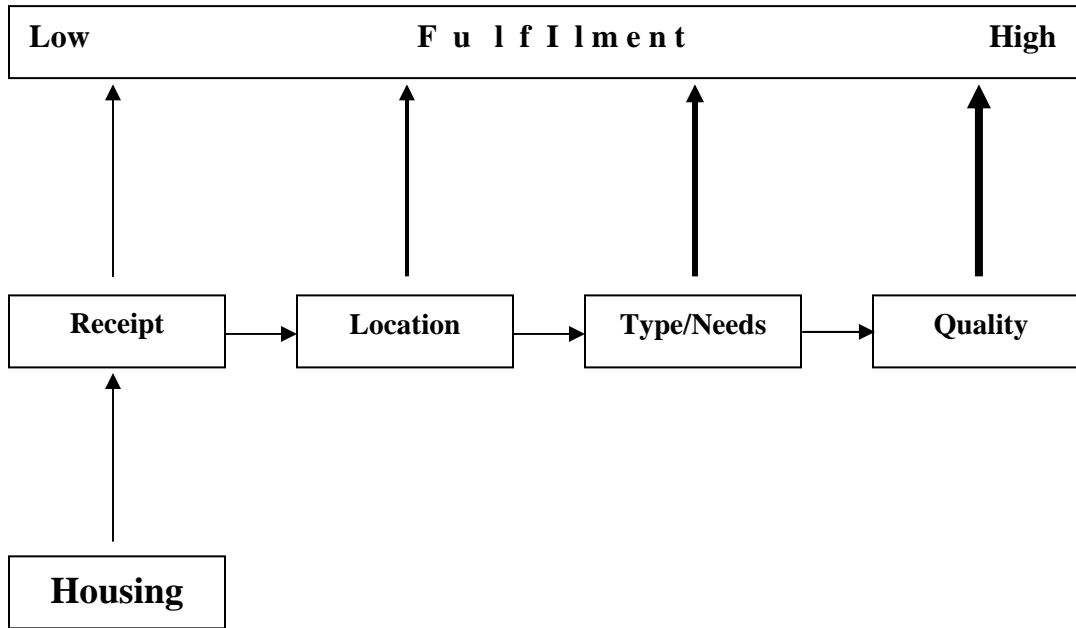
Community leaders are of the view that people find it difficult to restart their life or carry out their occupations without settling their housing needs. They have highlighted the disparity in quality and cost of construction where similar designs have been built at different quality and costs. They believe that the time taken to initiate the construction is far too long, sometimes the process is politicised and/or discouraged through bureaucracy. As a result, some NGOs and individuals have lost patience and abandoned projects resulting in the community losing the opportunity to have a house. The community leaders requested an adequate intervention and monitoring of progress of work by the Government. Further, the leaders expect the authorities to develop trust with regard to housing activities by displaying transparency when selecting beneficiaries.

*“The correct statistics of people affected was not provided... or even the number of houses damaged... at various times varying statistics were given and therefore they couldn't plan properly” - East*

*“The job situation is getting back to normal but their houses are not built to earlier state. The fishermen are given the needful to get back to their work but not the houses” - East*

*“We are living within the 100 metres. Those who are living far away got 1 to 1 ½ lakhs from the Government. Then a foreigner gave 1 lakh each and then private companies gave two lakhs each. See the amount they got” – South*

## Voice 2 – Post-Tsunami Housing



The importance given to shelter is only next to food as it is a difficult task to both provider and receiver due to involved cost and permanency. The summary of the comments implies four stages and the successful completion of these stages has a good possibility of making the recipient satisfied.

At the stage of **Receipt**, the assistance is subject to eligibility and ability of the recipient, which eliminates proportion of the community. From the recipient's point of view there is a possibility of being displeased if the new **Location** is a relocation. The **Type** of the house, meeting the floor area requirements and design practicalities have become sensitive issues, as it was difficult to strike a balance between individuals who had large houses and those who had small (clay) houses before the Tsunami. The inconsistency of **Quality** of the houses depicted poor monitoring procedures by the Government and wastage of finances. In this context, there is mixed views with regard to appreciation of housing and reconstruction programs. It is to be seen as an expectation and delivery phenomenon, hence it is not possible to attribute shortcomings to one party. However, the provider of housing needs to address the four stages identified in this research to provide a livelihood than a mere cement building.

### 2.3 Occupation / Employment

Occupation and employment was a major concern among the community leaders as communities represented by these leaders have displayed somewhat lower interest towards securing occupation and employment. According to the leaders, the communities have received varied assistance to get back to their means of livelihood i.e. boats and other necessary equipment, self-employment programmes conducted by the NGOs, and financial assistance from the State. These activities, however, have not reached to a level of satisfaction of the community leaders as a larger proportion of the community are still idling in camps or new settlement areas.

Community leaders were critical about some of the providers of assistance for their lack of understanding of the needs in the social and practical context. They have drawn attention to the following:

- Poor understanding of occupations and relative needs of the people – Deep and shallow sea fishing, day fishing, chena cultivation, paddy cultivation, gold smithy handcrafting etc.
- The manner the organizations gathered data through their own people without consulting the Grama Seveka or Divisional Secretariat.
- Not being able to provide assistance to the appropriate person who has the interest to get back to work.

In this regard, there were significant differences between the East and the South. Lack of proper fishing gear was emphasised by the leaders of the East. In the South, leaders were concerned of the fishermen who were to have their own equipment for them to carryout fishing independently, without getting the boats from the businessmen (Pre-Tsunami practice). Even though this seems to be promising, some community leaders were concerned about such individuals' inability to manage the process and getting into worse situations. In addition to fisheries, the need for assistance to get started in other occupations was also mentioned. Leaders believe that the reasons for these shortcomings are partly due to poor methods of data collection.

*“The NGOs have a wrong impression that all those who live within 200m are fishermen... there are masons... farmers...traders.... by and large they are fishermen”*  
- East

*“The biggest mistake the Government and the NGOs have made is they thought only the fisher folk was affected by the Tsunami... they worked with that in mind... but in my area there are more farmers.... their fields are destroyed.... nothing has been done to support them or rehabilitate the land... while the fisher-folk have got fishing boats nothing has been done to develop agriculture”* - East

*“What we need is to have our land back... Because we have experience in cultivation, if we can get money we could get the labourers and start work”* - East

*“The Grama Sevaka(GS) is the one who knows who does what... but the NGOs get information through their field officers and according to that information they distribute things... when distributing things to fishermen the others think they also should be given ... So even the teachers and traders ask... The NGOs think that everything should be distributed evenly and they are compelled to do so. Instead, if they can get the information through GS and distribute accordingly, things would be better” – East*

With regard to the fishing industry, the leaders are concerned about the lesser interest shown by the fisher-folk. The following aspects would have possibly contributed to this situation:

- Ability to continue their livelihood through the receipt of other means of income (money or kind) through NGOs, State and individuals.
- The boats provided are inappropriate – thus unable to get back to their occupation (See Appendix 6 – Makeshift boats cracks up at sea)
- Inability to handle the sophisticated equipment provided
- Lack of proper fishing equipment to give sufficient confidence to face the uncertain sea
- Lower awareness and knowledge of handling a Tsunami situation in the future
- Possibility of getting into other means of occupation – fresh water /river fishing
- Fear of sea – This was more implicit than explicit as fishermen are reluctant to admit that they are scared of the sea

*“Those days I did fishing but now I have got another job so I am not going to the sea. People are scared when the noise of the sea is loud or when it looks strong and rough” – South*

*“We cannot be satisfied about the way the problem of employment has been solved.... we have got boats and they are too big for the river and too small for the sea. And also these boats needs other gear...those cost about another 10,000 rupees” – East*

*“They don’t have the required boats to go and do the job...even if they face a danger they are not equipped or designed to protect themselves or to take them to another safe area” – East*

These comments make it clear that people expect greater moral support to get started in their occupations than mere financial and material assistance.

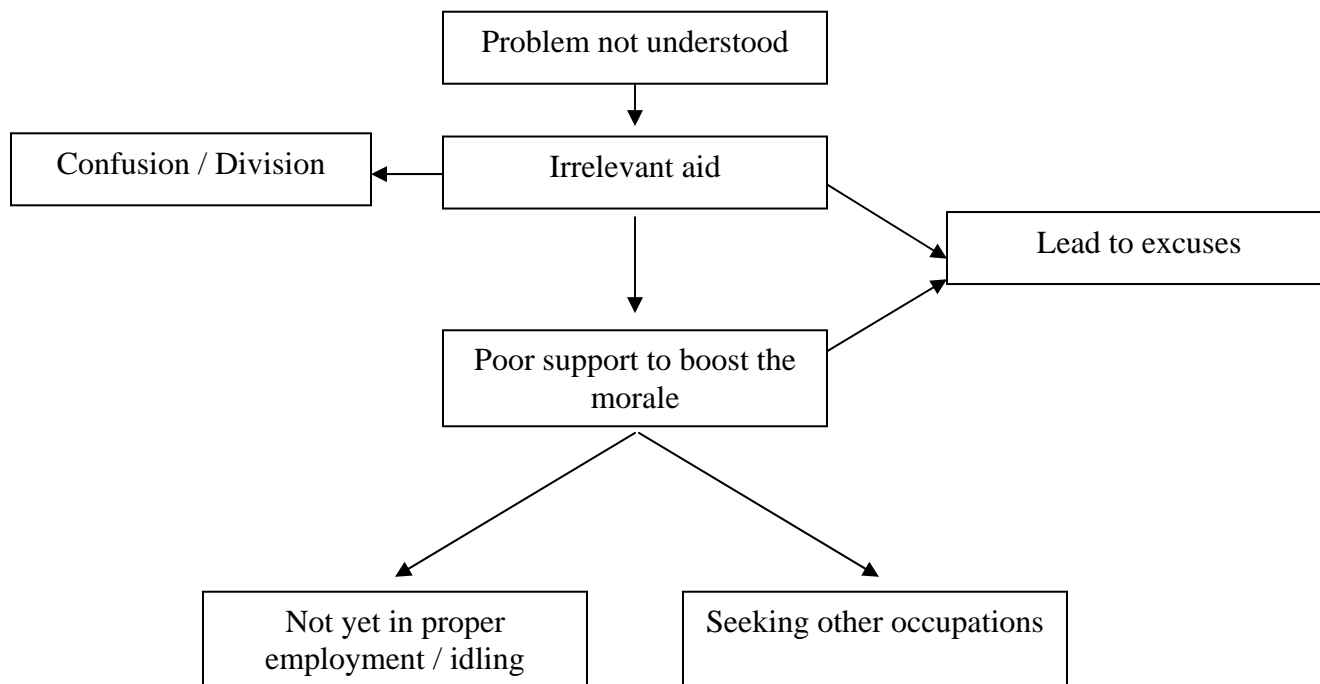
Some leaders expressed that fishing industry should be developed by identifying the needs of the local fishing community and their interest in fishing. This is based on the belief that Government has sufficient funds to meet all their requirements, i.e. fishing gear, harbour, modern technologies etc.

Community members with entrepreneur skill feel that responsibility is in their hands but complain that they need substantial financial support to initiate business. The entrepreneurs within the 100/200 metres were unable to raise finances, as they do not have property to offer as collateral to secure loans, hence at present they are going through a difficult time not being able to exercise their skills.

*”Those who were involved in good businesses have become beggars and they are coming behind us asking for aid.... which they don’t like to do at all... so they are trying to somehow build up their business... they go to the bank asking for a loan... when the bank asks for property, their property is in the 100 metre area.... So this is a big problem... If that rule is in operation then the banks should be so informed. Do you think that a man has to go on living like a beggar? The Government should take the responsibility on behalf of these people for their future” - South*

According to the leaders, those who are more interested in getting their businesses started were displeased with the Government for directing such entrepreneurs to NGOs and other private institutions rather than making a constructive effort to develop businesses and employment opportunities.

### Voice 3 - Possible Sequence of Activities that led to Non-occupation



The strengthening of the livelihood and employment aspect is an area that needs attention. The communities represented by the leaders believe that individuals are either not willing to work or seek new occupations. Since unwillingness is partly due to assistance provided, there should be a gradual process to strengthen the confidence of entrepreneurs and employees. Those who seek other forms of livelihood create employment pressure on non-sea going industries. In both situations it is inevitable that assistance should be provided to the ongoing industries and to explore post-Tsunami business opportunities, unless otherwise there could be communities dependent on the State. On the positive side, there are individuals who have come out of the state of mind mentioned earlier and made good use of the assistance provided.

## 2.4 Infrastructure

Requirement of infrastructure was discussed more in the East than in the South. This is partly due to the rapid infrastructure development in the South. According to the community leaders, the major roads and bridges have been repaired but some roads in the interior are yet to be attended to. Further, rebuilding of religious and community buildings are yet to be completed.

Some community leaders are of the view that the irrigation system for cultivation is a priority and progress is not satisfactory. Especially in the East and in some parts of the South, drinking water is still distributed through browsers, a service provided by the NGOs. The community leaders of the East believe that this service will soon come to an end and alternate supply system is not yet in place. Some areas are more populated due to resettlement of Tsunami victims and thereby the water that was provided through wells is not sufficient to cater to needs of a larger community.

In addition, those who have been living in less developed areas now expect solutions to their infrastructure needs in view of the fact that the Government has received sufficient funds for Tsunami rehabilitation work. The people who were most critical on this matter were the community members who earn their living on cultivation and therefore heavily dependent on reconstruction of water tanks, roads and bridges.

It is also evident that community leaders were keen to resolve other infrastructure development needs, which are not related to Tsunami, due to increased population as a result of relocation.

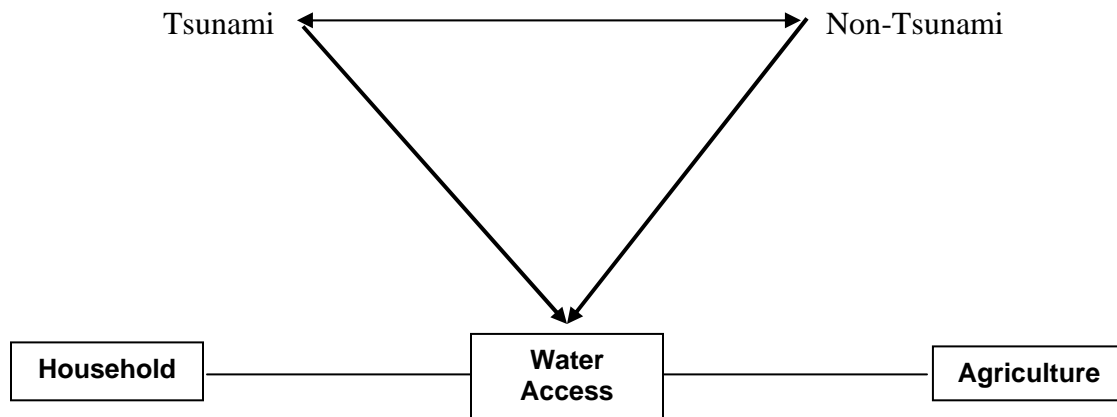
*“Our Kovil has about 200 acres. This area was auctioned for the benefit of those who are cultivating... for cultivation we get water from the ponds nearby. But because of Tsunami the bund is broken and there is less water. If the bund can be repaired we can collect water during the current rainy season for use in the dry season...that is also not done... NGOs came and saw it, but nothing has been done to repair it” – East*

*“One thing I have to stress... the NGOs don't go straight to the village... they first meet the Divisional Secretary (DS) who in turn refers to the Gra ma Sevaka. So each says what they are planning to do, either repairing the road, providing health facilities etc. or then they ask the DS which road needs repairing. He directs them to the relevant place...so the major coordination activities have been done by the Government. That is how these roads have come back to normal” - East*

*“There were only 45 families living in this area, then the water was sufficient, but now there are 200 families and water is not at all enough” - East*

*“There is a river in our area.... ...if there was a bridge the 10 in my family who died would have being saved... because they tried to cross the river, they all died” - East*

## Voice 4 – Infrastructure



The post-Tsunami infrastructure need is greater in the East. The main concern was water and access roads both for households and for agricultural purposes. The leaders are also keen to fulfil non-Tsunami infrastructure developments, as they are a priority need to the community in the current context.

## 2.5 Change in Value Systems

Comments made by community leaders reflect that the Tsunami affected areas are going through a social change. They indicated their concern pertaining to heritage, culture and value system of their communities. They believed that the country can speak highly of a well documented history of over 2000 years and a culture that makes Sri Lankans a unique nation. Therefore, it is important to explore change in culture and value systems.

Culture is defined as an individual's **knowledge, beliefs, customs, and skills** that are carried forward in a society. It has material or overt aspect and a socio-psychological or covert aspect. In general, culture is seen both as a process as well as a product, which often includes *religion* (Nanayakkara, G 1999). Values are sets of integrated **ideas, concepts and principles** to which individuals, groups, and societies attach strong sentiments. According to Davis (1971) an integrated value system provides a sense of meaning and purpose of existence: it supplies a framework of preferences by which man can evaluate his **thoughts and actions**, and those of **others**.

According to Professor Nanayakkara<sup>1</sup> (1999 p.35) the family is the institution, which concerns itself with love, marriage, sexual relationship, reproduction and child bearing and socialisation of the child. He has made the following observation about Sri Lankan families:

- Traditionally marriage is proposed by the parents
- Marriage is also viewed as a means to enhance the bases of wealth and power
- Child rearing are considered natural and therefore inevitable or accidental rather than purposeful
- Everyone is expected to work and greater morale is attributed to older men than younger and women
- Family members are expected to contribute to the well-being of the family
- Marriage does not necessarily break up economic ties in the family
- The individual wealth achieved is expected to be used to support the other family members
- Family members are expected to learn to be thrifty
- Interdependence between the family unit and the individual to be maintained
- Child learns system of control through the family
- Decision-making system of the family is hierarchical and the individual is expected to look for approval, hence conformity is promoted
- Generally lack self-confidence, less opportunities to assess strengths and weaknesses, hence expected to be directed
- Occupation is mainly to be seen a means than the end

The survey on youths conducted by a team headed by Professor Hettige<sup>2</sup> among 15-29 years of age describes the following (Youth Survey 2000):

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<sup>1</sup> Head of Postgraduate Institute of Management, University of Sri Jayawardhenapura

<sup>2</sup> Former Vice Chancellor, University of Colombo and Professor of Sociology

45.3% and 34.8% of youth spend time with the family and immediate friends respectively. 91% of Sinhala youth say that all their friends are from the same ethnic group. The corresponding figures for Tamil and Muslim youth are 81% and 74%.

88% of youth can speak Sinhala well and only 7-11% said that they do not have knowledge of Sinhala. 68% do not speak Tamil and only 25% have a good knowledge of spoken Tamil. Only 5.6% youth are reported to have fluency in spoken English. This is confined to the highly urbanized Western province.

57.1% and 17.8% of the youth are of the view that development programmes are beneficial to those with political connections or well to do people. Only 17.3% believe that development programmes have benefited the poor and needy.

71.2% of youth believe that Sri Lanka does not have a society of Justice (“*Sadharana Samajaya*”). This figure is high among those who have Advanced Level, Degree or higher education. 62% of the sampled youth are committed to socialist ideologies.

Professor Hettige further says: “Sri Lankan youth do not have opportunities for pursuing challenging life goals. Many youth do not have role models. Those who have role models mentioned such figures as sportsmen, family members, actors etc. and rarely mentioned professionals, scientists, entrepreneurs or social activists.

The life of pre-Tsunami (See Appendix 2 - Life Prior to Tsunami) has to be looked in the context described above. It is believed that the average family cares for their family and the immediate circle. There is a high possibility to share resources and help each other if economic constraints are experienced. Sri Lankan societies generally prefer to live in harmony even with strong confrontational attitudes. If confrontations occur most probably it could be due to backfired gossip or jealousy. Compared to social interactions taking place, argument leading to intervention by the police is relatively low. However, Sri Lankan communities are generally seen as a society who displays emotions verbally (See Appendix 2 – Life Prior to Tsunami).

### State of Mind and Behaviour after Tsunami

The Tsunami has shattered the life of the community. According to community leaders, having overcome the initial emotional and physical difficulties without much time to think, they have reached a state of frustration. Not having an income source and courage to restart life has led communities worrying about not being able to achieve expectations they had before the Tsunami, i.e. education for children, achieving occupational targets, house and property development etc. (See Appendix 3 – Experiences of Tsunami)

*“The community who wanted to live peacefully while attending to agricultural work and who are keen to educate their children...computer science, O/L etc..... now they **don’t have a proper income** to plan these.... And they take to drinks...” – East*

*“The mason needs more than the basics.... He needs other things also..... altogether he has to spend about 5000/-.... buy little by little... one should have the feeling for it...**need courage to start again**” –South*

This frustration was further aggravated when some communities realized that they are no different to the poorest families in their community before the Tsunami. They had self-dignity which they were fast losing. Pleading for assistance was reluctantly carried out and gradually they started to accept realities of life. The communities who have gone through with this change are self-pitying. Even though this behavior has not happened in a liner manner, it could be seen that communities have started losing self-confidence and are displaying characteristics of insecurity.

*“Some people were **helpless**... became like **beggars**... Recently a NGO has come to distribute things and has scolded one of my friends in a way that you don't speak like that even to a beggar ...” - East*

*“Say I go to the Grama Sevaka... he directs us to another place and that is just a voluntary organization.... Why cannot the Government provide solutions to our concerns... why are they directing us here and there? We have come to a stage where even to get the fishing scale, we have to beg from somebody... people of down south have become beggars because of the Tsunami and not only us the whole Sri Lanka has become beggars... because **we beg for the things that we need**... why cannot the Government do something about this, having received so much funds” – South*

*“We have **not being cared** for by any one.... not even by the NGOs, as we are living within the 100metre, because of that **we didn't get any help**... That itself has become a problem and a reason not to give aid. The Government has more problems... so it is better to have this rule and keep us aside” - South*

According to community leaders the analysis identified following indicators of behavior:

- Self-centered behavior
- Opportunistic behavior
- Indifferent behavior

As a result, there seems to be four over-lapping social categories prevailing since Tsunami - hence the culture is a mix of the following:

- A) Category who believes in collecting or requesting for as many items as possible, property or cash for a better future (Collector)
- B) Category who believes in getting the best to enjoy life and do every thing possible at present (Enjoyer)
- C) Category who is keen to get back to pre-Tsunami life through conventional means with support (Returnee)
- D) Category who believes that they should depend on someone to shape their life (Depender)

The evolved society seems to be dialectic in the above manner. Ironically, both A and B categories seem to be having a desire for material things while C is depicting the behavior described by Professor Nanayakkara (1999) and D is in need of community help. On the whole there is a process of internalizing taking place at different levels.

### Resultant Changes in Society after Tsunami

With the above stated mindset and behaviour of people, the following changes in the society were observed:

- More pregnancies
- Interest in sex and marriages
- Deteriorating religious values and/or relationships with temple and church
- Upgrading to stronger or better alcohol and cigarettes and other vices
- More into alcohol – more money, forget worries, overcome sadness
- Get married in order to obtain goodies which are given per household

*“Now there are **more marriages** ... because some of the goodies are given to families and not to individuals... because of that people get married in order to get the facilities... so they are an individual family unit” – East*

*“After the Tsunami **pregnancies are also more**... because the men do not go to work... they do some labour work... get a few rupees and drink out of that, then stay with the women...the amount of pregnancy which was about 25% has increased to 75%” – East*

*“**Drinking is on the increase**... a particular organization in Nuwara Eliya gave us 800 radios... 150 out of them were given to the bar in exchange for arrack” – East*

*“Because they have been getting a lot of goodies they feel this is the time to **just to enjoy it**... and not to be working” - East*

*“Soon after the Tsunami they were concerned about the religion but **now they are more interested on what they are getting**” – East*

*“They didn’t like the way the priests handled the activities... **it is not the religion but the priests**... They don’t go to the temple neither gives alms...they have got distanced from the temple. Nobody has changed the religion because of the difference of treatment or whatever...Some came and tried but it didn’t work” - South*

The A, B, C and D behavior categories described above resulted in propagating "an integrated value system that provides a sense of meaning and purpose of existence to evolved realities of life." (Davis 1971). Hence it supplied a framework of preferences by which they can evaluate their thoughts and actions.

Hence the values identified can be either positive or negative by the manner in which it is being applied and perceived. As per the comments of the leaders, the following value driven behaviour was observed:

*Collectiveness -*

Some of the community members are keen to share their resources to develop the community, as they believe that collectively they will have more bargaining power where they will be able to reach better standards of life in post-Tsunami. They were appreciative of assistance provided and repeatedly comment about harmony, unity, protection and importance of caring. It is interesting to note that most of the community leaders possess this behaviour (See Appendix 3-Experience of Tsunami and 4-Relief operation: Retrospection).

*Animosity -*

Animosity is a key notable factor that the community leaders repeatedly mentioned. They also believed with the experience of Tsunami, it is inevitable for some community members to be living in bitterness and their reaction is to be arrogant and argumentative. According to the leaders, this behaviour does not help the community member or the society. They are wondering why it is continuing and what should be done?

*“Now people live quite close to each other and therefore... young people start affairs and because of those fights start. I generally like to live in a clean environment and if the other person is not interested, then there are **arguments and fights**...” – East*

*“NGOs are the people who actually spoilt the situation. They don’t ask what we need.... They don't come to meet us, instead, if there are 400 people they bring things for 100 people and distribute and go. These created **competitiveness, anger, and division among people**.... and now we cannot bring them together” - South*

*Self-pettiness -*

On the other hand, some community members pity themselves and this made them to lead a passive and helpless life with low self-respect. As per the community leaders, this has resulted in carrying out demeaning acts without a shame while others seem to be expecting the Government to take charge of their lives.

*“Everybody was fighting for things... young girls and boys go in queues, fight to get things and they **lost their self respect**... dignity. There are some who cannot do this. Then they are not getting what they should.... **They feel bad about everything happening around. They ask us why they have to go through this.** We experienced this while distributing things...” – South*

*“At least the Parliament should take intelligent decisions at a time like this... either to win or lose at the elections... at a time when the people are in trouble... they have to first make them settle down .... Then explain to them why they cannot go on living within that area and do something. We **were trying to build up our morale and it was all killed by this 100 metre rule**” - East*

*“There is a big difference... Tsunami showed us some danger... And **time has come for us to develop** but people are waiting until things come to them. Sometimes I feel sorry that people have changed and it is not the same person that we associated before... due to the help that he got, he ignores us... Therefore I feel the close relationship that we had is gone...” South*

#### *Laziness -*

A main concern of community leaders was the laziness of the community members where lethargy is becoming common behaviour to many individuals. This behaviour is partly due to free flow of sustainable income and goods from the charitable institutions.

*“Either they are scared of living along the beach...or the head of household have become lazy... Then they are not serious on any activity... do not care for the elders...and those who smoked beedi are now smoking cigarettes.... **Ready to spend more than their income**” – East*

*“Even some are **lazy to go for jobs**.... because they have been getting things free... they go on trying to enjoy themselves rather than working ... they don't want to develop on their own. They are not ready to do the jobs they have being doing so far. This is a major disaster” –South*

*“They feel these organizations should dole out to them. They have collected all the money they are supposed to get and having collected them feel that they need not to go to work..... **No interest on their own businesses or to be employed**” - East*

#### *Ungratefulness -*

The leaders observed that community members have become ungrateful to the efforts put in by the Government, NGOs, other institutions and individuals. There were instances where recipients make a mockery out of what is given.

*“People got enough of things... those who lost their houses got houses... some even got 4-5 sets of kitchenware.... **Even then they are not satisfied**... Now they are talking about getting aid from the Government, through the money that Government has received” – South*

*“But they are never happy with what they are getting and trying to get more and more. I was beaten very badly because of that... I have not taken anything unreasonably... I like if people can speak openly rather than fighting.... I tell them to come and speak openly”*  
– South

*“The houses they built are not the ones that these people will ever be able to build... some are worth 6 lakhs... even that these people are not satisfied. They tried to resolve all their problems through the aid that they are getting.... **When they get one house they thought of getting another** to be given to a child”* –East

#### *Dishonesty -*

The whole process of relatively unmanaged distribution of goods and services seems to have resulted in propagating dishonesty. As per the community leaders the members of the community gradually make false claims to get more. Since this was happening for the last seven months, community members now have become indifferent to such behaviour.

*“After the Tsunami people **have started lying more**. They have lost interest in their jobs.... About 50%... they feel they don't need to earn ...”* – East

*“If they have three boats, six people can work in them but instead they go to work in two boats and sell the other... **and use that money for something else**. But the Government think 200 boats have been given and they have solved that problem”* - East

*“The fishermen who went to sea day and night are yet staying at home having received new boats ... There are cases where a man who has got a boat asking for another boat... saying it is for the son, whereas the son is not a fisherman.... And even with the boat he is having he is not going to the sea”* - South

#### *Fearfulness -*

The comments of the community leaders depict how the scary experiences of Tsunami have made some of them live in fear. This aspect has affected the fishing industry more than any other, as some fishermen are reluctant to go fishing due to fear of the sea. Some of these fishermen are in a confused state, which is not in keeping with the anticipated personality of a fisherman. Hence they try to justify their attitude by referring to the assistance they have received from charitable organisations.

*“**People are scared...** especially the small children scream when they see the sea...they say they cannot stay...therefore those people ask for a house away from sea... ”* – South

*“In my village the fishermen who are not scared of the sea are going fishing.... **those who are scared fish from the river**. They are not lazy but if there is a Tsunami again they don't know what to do”* - East

### *Jealousy -*

Jealousy between the communities has gone beyond brotherhood or social relationships that they had prior to Tsunami. The following narration is a case in point:

*They didn't get proper aid because they are living within the 100-metres ... those who are living away got 1 to 1 1/2 lakhs from the Government. Then a foreigner gave 1 lakh each and then private companies gave two lakhs each. See the total they got and ... then the foreigners came and gave other goodies – an almirah, a TV, set of chairs, dining table, cassette, two beds, two mattresses, gas cooker and cylinder. Even after having a gas cylinder they took the one that the foreigners gave ... including things worth 85,000 rupees. They were also given cement, bricks and stones...now they can do anything.... But, others are yet living in tents because of the 100m rule. Why. Because of that rule... those who flourished... flourished fully and the others are yet in the same status” - South*

### *Greediness -*

Greediness seems to be the key value change since Tsunami. According to community leaders it is clearly evident that members of the community have become greedy and selfish. The evolved behaviour is such that some of the members are collecting and working towards getting all the assistance from the State, NGOs or other means. To do so they are willing to carryout somewhat unfair or dishonest practices.

In addition, among some others there is a mindset to actively prevent others in the community from getting similar assistance. Therefore some are keen to process their claims secretly.

*“By giving like that this whole society was corrupted. Because of that **people became very greedy**...in a very nasty way.... When they saw the amount of things that they are getting they became greedy and started collecting” - East*

*“This **Tsunami created greediness in people**... they are united, but when it comes to getting things they fight because they are greedy.... But they are united because they don't think about the religious difference” - South*

*“In some families where they have lost their loved ones they are no longer concerned about them.... They are now forgetting their culture and religion and have started collecting things... and the other thing is **people try to collect without allowing the neighbour to get anything**...or try to go to a place where things are being distributed without telling the neighbour... when I am getting dressed the neighbour is wondering where I am going... but she wouldn't ask me.... so what people do is to go in the same dress. Value-wise people have gone down to that level ...- South*

*Indignity -*

The difficulties that communities have gone through seem to have changed the public life of individuals. The mechanisms used to get assistance made them to be less self-conscious, especially women. Hence certain social barriers have been broken where some youth seem to be comfortable whilst others find it difficult to adjust to the changed behavioural pattern.

*“I got to know that lot of women were harassed...because they don’t have proper houses... the tents don’t have a proper door... With the Tsunami people have **lost self-respect and shame**... the way they dress is not decent... hugging in public is now practised in the village... they are ready to openly display their feelings now.... even in the bus I have seen couples kissing... the way they behave is not acceptable at all” - South*

*“There are some who don’t go to their permanent houses in order to get goodies. They **don’t mind living in their tents to get some more things**. Then we told them you will get a tent only if you do not go... so they went” - East*

*“There are people **who didn’t face the Tsunami but have given up their jobs and have come to get Tsunami assistance**.... We feel they should not be given assistance ...then these people will start working and learn to stand on their own...” - South*

Gratification

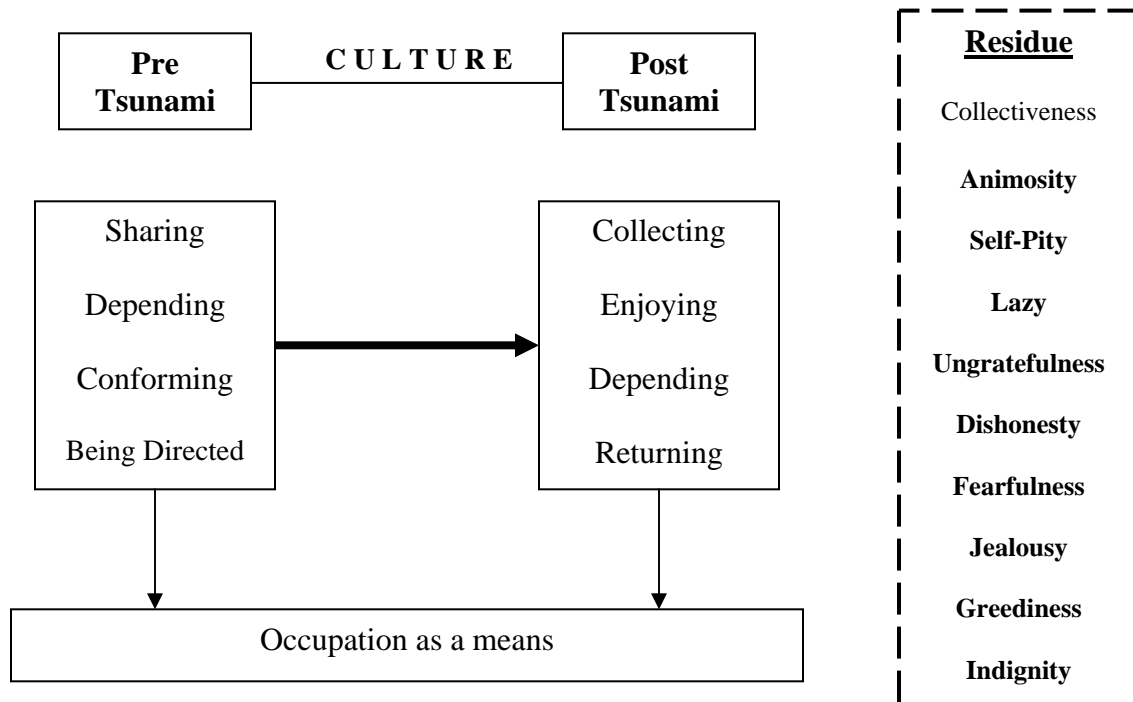
Looking back on the initial relief operations, the community leaders were positive about the manner in which food was provided and the timing. Though some leaders have experienced food shortages, by and large they accepted that the best was done under the circumstances. (See Appendix 4 – Relief operation: Retrospection)

The distribution of clothes was well received by the leaders and there were many instances where individuals (women) were able to protect their self-respect. However, subsequent over-supply of clothes had created certain unpleasantness where a ‘refugee feeling’ has crept in through receiving non-wearable clothes.

With regard to the assistance received the leaders were thankful to some NGOs for their untiring commitment to uplift livelihood of the community and consistent support to date.

*“Tsunami came very unexpectedly and people all over contributed greatly for the welfare of those affected .... In a most meaningful manner .... In many forms without any shortages... for a very long time.... Even up to now... there is **“pin wathura”**(Tsunami is seen as meritorious water)” – South*

## Voice 5 – Change in value system



As described by Professor Nanayakkara, it could be seen that the Sri Lankan culture depicts sharing, depending and conforming, as directed by a superior in the family. Since Tsunami these aspects have changed into a mix of characteristics describing nature of excessive collection of goods, enjoyment of life and dependence, whilst some others were struggling to get back on their feet. Further, with the receipt of reasonable and consistent assistance, people have changed from the pre-Tsunami belief of occupation as a means of livelihood. The society therefore is functioning with residue of values that are becoming a key concern of the leaders.

### **3.0 FACING THE FUTURE**

#### **3.1 Views about Facing Future Tsunamis**

The exploration of ways to face a Tsunami in the future identified both experience-based and deductive-based suggestions.

Leaders believe that the Tsunami devastation was less in areas where there were barriers or boulders. Hence they expect the government to launch effective means of conserving the coastline especially in critical areas.

They have also observed that strong buildings with pillars but without walls were saved from the Tsunami. They believe properly executed such design concept could be appropriate to face the threat of any future Tsunamis.

Leaders were of the view that Tsunami warning system needs to be both electronic and manual. Whereas electronic sophistication is needed for advance warning and communication, a manual system is also essential to train communities to communicate effectively and efficiently. Some have discussed ancient methods of communication like using runners to carry the message.

Leaders felt that a number of deaths would have been avoided if communities were knowledgeable about Tsunami and its scale of devastation. Hence leaders expect awareness programs to be initiated by the Government to educate the communities in the coastal belt.

They were also of the view that there should be an effective mechanism to gather accurate data after the Tsunami, for people to receive meaningful assistance and speedier reconstruction.

#### **3.2 Opinions**

The understanding of the leaders were that the private organisations and NGO's have sufficient funds to spend for assistance, and the possibility of these organisations receiving more next year depended on the amount they spent this year. Therefore, they believed that to achieve objectives of such organisations they need receivers; hence the need to take the receiver as the stakeholder in a charitable venture.

Leaders were of the view that some providers of assistance forgot that Tsunami recipients are people who were leading a full life and therefore their needs are not the needs of refugees. Meanwhile, there are some recipients who looked forward to get back to comforts they were used to. Leaders believe that they need to act cohesively to establish dignity even though at present they need assistance. Wherever this does not happen they

believe that one could experience deterioration of the social value system. The poor quality dry rations (rice) provided by the Government were given as an indication of the indifference shown towards Tsunami recipients.

According to community leaders, the community members are sensitive to providers' exploiting of assistance for publicity, exemption of tax, self-gratification, etc. and are able to recognise genuine assistance. Hence such acts need to be carried out with care and respect.

The lack of communication between community-assisting groups and the Government has resulted in mismanagement of relief operations that led communities to perceive the program as non-transparent, partial, non-fulfilling, non-relevant and non-respecting social status of individuals. Therefore, the community leaders repeatedly commented on the importance of their presence in committees that decide on the future of their livelihood. They have shown many instances of the impracticality of decisions taken in their absence (Section B, 2.1 and 2.2), which has led to waste of material and resources.

They have also experienced the poor documentation procedures that led to limitations in providing and receiving assistance. Further, food stamps and other State assistance were received critically due to this shortcoming. Some leaders viewed that the Police carried out a commendable service but they were not geared to accommodate reporting procedures to make recipients to get their claims speedily.

The leaders agreed that all community leaders have not carried out their activities with integrity. Hence they were seen as those who volunteered to lead the communities for personal or family advantages.

Those who recollect experiences of war believe that war is worse than Tsunami as people are recurrently facing a threatened situation. In this context, leaders commented that having observed the manner in which the Tsunami was handled, the Government does not have the capabilities to handle the present war.

By and large the leaders were of the view that the administrative system of Sri Lanka is not transparent and has not handled the Tsunami situation to its expected standards. This, together with the political leaders considering Tsunami a political opportunity to win future elections, has unnecessarily delayed the reconstruction programs.

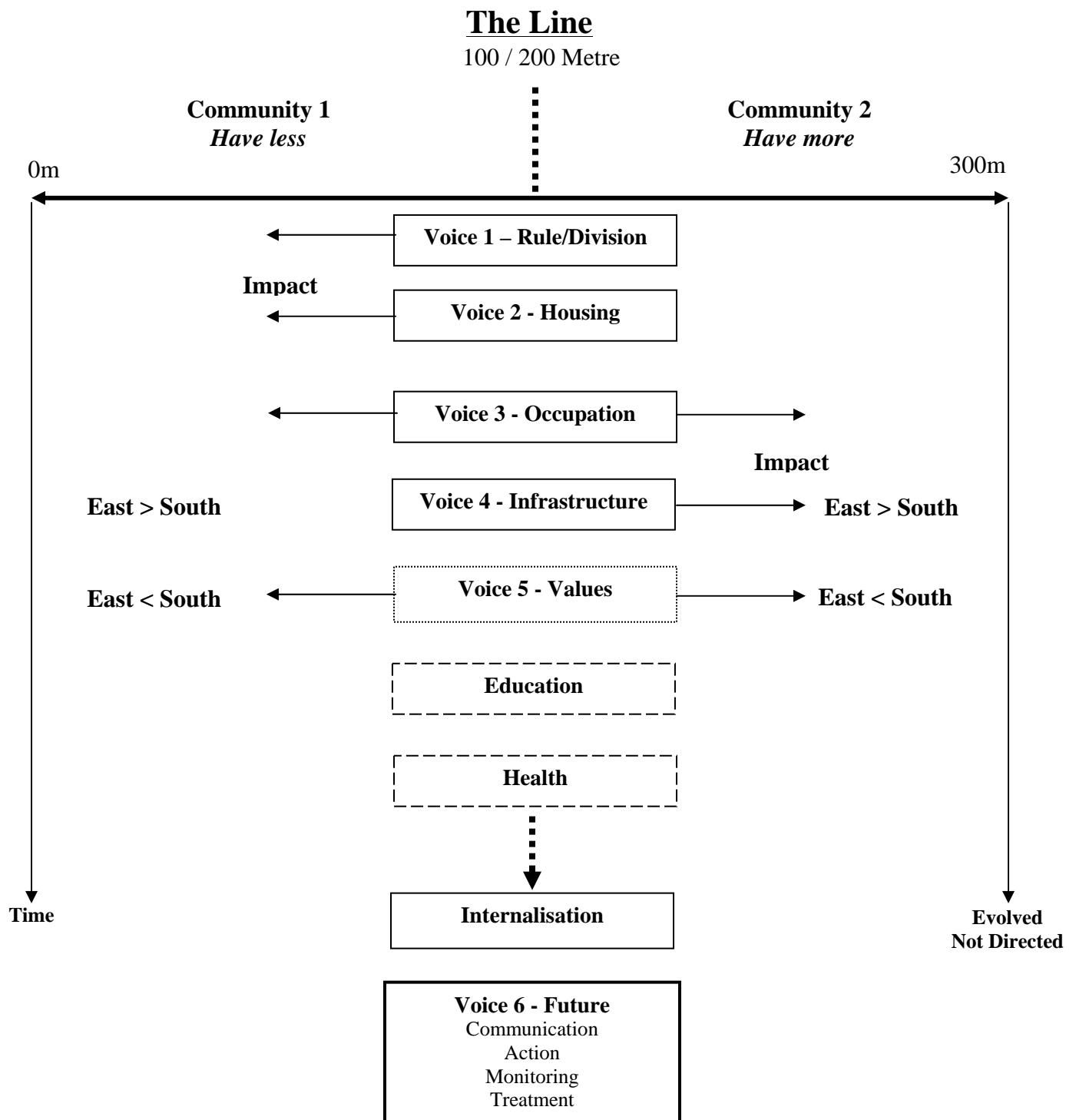
## **Voice 6 – FUTURE**

Leaders' views with regard to facing future Tsunami are subject to limited exposure on the subject. The key notable comments centred round coast conservation, Tsunami resistant housing, need of a warning system (both electronic and manual), awareness programs and post-Tsunami documentation systems.

The leaders have a strong viewpoint about Tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction. They would like to communicate that a large percentage of the community have lived a dignified life and that providers of assistance need to recognise this when interacting. Further, they believe that the recipient is a stakeholder of the program and has a reasonable status, which is yet to be established. In this context, providers of assistance are expected not to exploit their role to obtain publicity at the expense the community. They request that if decisions are to be taken on behalf of the community the authorities should involve the leaders for better results. The key notable shortcomings where leaders' contribution can be appreciated are communication and documentation. Some of the leaders are of the view that poor transparency of the administration has delayed the rehabilitation and reconstruction program and if this attitude prevails in the administration, the Government will find it difficult to resolve the ethnic issue.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present research is to explore community leaders' retrospective and prospective views on Tsunami devastation and reconstruction, on economic, governance, social and social accountability of the community in the light of the **100/200metre rule**. The community leaders voiced six issues, which need immediate attention. They are comparatively satisfied with the progress of education and health aspects, hence they discussed in detail about the rule itself, housing, occupation, infrastructure, social value systems and future:



The aspects discussed by the leaders have a direct and indirect impact on economic, governance, social and social accountability hence each will be looked at separately.

Economic development since Tsunami has not reached the level of satisfaction of the leaders due to slow progress in business and enterprise environment in the community. The evolved business environment is not conducive to raise finances (Voice 1 – 100/200metre rule) and/or to have committed human resources (Voice 3 - Occupation), hence at present starting and sustaining a business is somewhat remote in the minds of the business community. The individuals' lack of interest in occupations is partly due to their dependency on assistance from the State, other institutions and individuals (Voice 5 - Values). Also the slow progress or lack of appropriate career/occupation development programs (Voice 3 - Occupation) and unresolved housing issues (Voice 2 - Housing) have not provided necessary confidence to think about occupation and employment.

Post-Tsunami reconstruction activities are rather evolved than directed. There is greater visibility of non-State and individual activities than State involvement. The adequate intervention of the Government therefore is questionable. Justification of this is the manner in which 100/200metre rule is disseminated to the public, distribution of dry rations and allowances etc. This has further confused the community who are going through a difficult period. What is clearly seen is the lack (or absence) of authority (governance) and integrated planning. Hence reconstruction programs are an amalgamation of small to medium scale projects and not a well thought out integrated reconstruction program.

The execution of the reconstruction program is seen as a physical movement of communities and material/property. The activities do not reflect recognition of socio-cultural aspects adequately. The importance of the socio-cultural aspect increases when communities move from relief stage (from camp) to reconstruction stage (to own house). This is evidently seen in relocation programs where some communities are not willing to occupy allocated houses (Voice 2 – Housing and Voice 4 - Infrastructure). Lesser understanding of socio-cultural aspects by the provider further resulted in deterioration or change in value system in the community (Voice 5 - Values).

The description above questions the accountability of this evolved situation implicitly. Before coming to a conclusion it is important to understand how communities can react the way they have done after a catastrophic event. The devastated community of the Tsunami is seen as being lazy, greedy, full of animosity, ungrateful, acting with indignity etc. (Voice 5 – Values) and not interested in working (Voice 3 – Occupation). They were known to be leading a reasonably dignified life before Tsunami. This change in behaviour is evidently linked to interaction between provider of assistance and the receiver. The manner in which the provider performed without adequate governance and socio-cultural understanding has led the community to *internalise* the providers'

definition of receivers' behaviour. In this context the 'accountability' is in the hands of those who engaged in programs of assistance without giving due recognition to socio-cultural values of the society.

The future reconstruction programs need a two-way process between provider and receiver, taking the receiver as a stakeholder than a mere disadvantaged receiver (Voice 6 - Future).

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## Appendix 1

### PARLIAMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA - COAST CONSERVATION ACT, NO.57 OF 1981

#### **The relevant Excerpts:**

AN ACT TO MAKE PROVISION FOR A SURVEY OF THE COASTAL ZONE AND THE PREPARATION OF A COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT PLAN; TO REGULATE AND CONTROL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE COASTAL ZONE; TO MAKE PROVISION FOR THE FORMULATION AND EXECUTION OF SCHEMES OF WORK FOR COAST CONSERVATION WITHIN THE COASTAL ZONE; TO MAKE CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS TO CERTAIN WRITTEN LAWS; AND TO PROVIDE FOR MATTERS CONNECTED THEREWITH ON INCIDENTAL THERETO.

Be it enacted by the Parliament of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka as follows:

1. This Act may be cited as the Coast Conservation Act, No.57 of 1981, and shall come into operation on such date as the Minister may appoint by Order published in the *Gazette* (hereinafter referred to as the appointed date”).

#### PERMIT PROCEDURE

14. (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of any other law, no person shall engage in any development activity other than a prescribed development activity within the Coastal Zone except under the authority of a permit issued in that behalf by the Director.

15. No permit shall be issued by the Director under this Part unless the proposed development activity

- (b) is consistent with the Coastal Zone Management Plan and any regulations made to give effect to such Plan, or if the application is received prior to the date of coming into operation of such Plan, satisfies the criteria prescribed under section 13, and
- (b) will not otherwise have any adverse effect on the stability, productivity and environmental quality of the Coastal Zone.

26. It shall be lawful for the Director or any officer generally or specially authorized by him in writing, at any reasonable time to enter upon any land within the Coastal Zone and then do such acts as may be reasonably necessary for the purpose of executing any scheme of work or of ascertaining whether the conditions attached to any permit issues under this Act are being or have been complied with or of making any survey, examination or investigation, preliminary or incidental to the exercise of any power or the discharge of any function under this Act, or any regulations made thereunder.

28. Any person who acts in contravention of the provisions of section 14 shall be guilty of an offence under this Act and shall on conviction, after summary trial before a Magistrate, be liable in the case of a first offence, to a fine not less than five hundred rupees and not exceeding twenty-five thousand rupees or to imprisonment of either description to a term not exceeding one year or to both such fine and imprisonment, and in the case of a second or subsequent offences, a fine of not less than one thousand rupees and not exceeding fifty thousand rupees or to imprisonment of either description for a term not exceeding two years or to both such fine and imprisonment.

31. No person shall, with effect from the appointment date, erect or construct any authorized structure, house, hut, shed or other building on any part of the Coastal Zone.

37. Section 56 of the Housing and Town Improvement Ordinance is hereby amended by the addition, at the end of that section, of the following new subsection: -

(4) Nothing in this section shall be read and construed as empowering the Minister to sanction any improvement scheme framed for any area, which is situated within the Coastal Zone except after consultation with the Minister in charge of the subject of Coast conservation.

38. Section 29 of the Town and Country Planning Ordinance is hereby amended by the addition, at the end of that section of the following new subsection: -

(3) The minister shall not under section 25 or section 28 provisionally approve or sanction any draft scheme which contains any provision relating to any area of land which is situated within the Coastal Zone, except after consultation with the Minister in charge of the subject of Coast Conservation.

39. Section 7 and 8 of the Tourist Development Act, No14 of 1968, are hereby repealed.

40. Section 13 of the Mines and Minerals Law, No.4 of 1973, is hereby amended in subsection (1) of that section as follows;

(a) in paragraph (iii) of that subsection, by the substitution, for the words “any local authority”, of the words “any local authority; and  
(b) by the addition, at the end of that subsection, of the following new

paragraph:-

(iv) without the approval of the Minister in charge of Coast Conservation to mine or prospect for any mineral upon land situated within the Coastal Zone as defined in the Coast Conservation Act, 1981.

42. In this Act, unless the context otherwise require-

“Coast” means the border of land, which is adjacent to the sea and not covered by seawater:

“Coast conservation” means the protection and preservation of the coast from sea erosion or encroachment by the sea, and includes the planning and management of development activity within the Coastal Zone:

“Coastal Zone” means that area lying within a limit of three hundred metres landwards of the Mean High Water line and a limit of two kilometres seawards of the Mean Low Water line and in the case of rivers, streams, lagoons, or any other body of water connected to the sea either permanently or periodically, the landward boundary shall extend to a limit of two kilometres measured perpendicular to the straight base line drawn between the natural entrance points thereof and shall include the waters of such rivers, streams and lagoons or any other body of water so connected to the sea:

“Coastline” means the line of intersection of the plane of water at Mean Sea Level with the coast:

“Development activity” means any activity likely to alter the physical nature of the Coastal Zone in any way, and includes the construction of buildings and works, the deposit of wastes or other material from outfalls, vessels or by other means, the removal of sand, coral, shells, natural vegetation, sea grass or other substances, dredging and filling, land reclamation and mining or drilling for minerals, but does not include fishing.

## Appendix 2

### LIFESTYLE PRIOR TO TSUNAMI

It was understood that prior to Tsunami these communities were well settled with a set routine of work and leisure; unless otherwise a special need arose. Thus they had comfortably adjusted to a life style of their choice. Arguments, gossip, fights and jealousy formed part of their lives, though not harmful to the society.

The majority enjoyed more than basic comforts in life, especially those in the South. The interest on education and subsequent employment among the Southerners is higher whereas the Easterners are more occupation driven.

The following description will provide common and distinctive lifestyles of communities in East and South:

#### East

- Mostly within the middle or lower income social classes.
- Religions mostly observed are Islam, Hinduism or Christianity
- Occupied as fishermen, farmers, cultivators, jewelers, businessmen (running their own grocery, hardware shop or hire boats to fishermen) Main crops are coconut, vegetables & betel
- Women either help in farming or are involved in domestic industries, i.e. palm leaf handicraft. (Muslim women in occupation are low)
- Interest in education is somewhat low
- Daily wage varies from Rs.250-500

#### South

- Mostly within upper middle, middle and lower income social classes
- Religions mostly observed are Buddhism, Christianity and Islam
- Occupied as Mechanics, Masons, Painters, Labourers, Businessmen, Three Wheeler drivers/owners, Fishermen, Teachers, Rope/mat weavers
- Employed in Government sector, garment factories or self-employed
- Both men as well as women are keen on an occupation or being employed
- Diverse in view with regard to education. Some feel even if educated one could earn better by getting into business. Hence even after obtaining a substantial education, opt for fishing or some other business in order to earn more.
- Most families enjoyed basic comforts of life such as pipe borne water using water pumps, electricity and electrical equipment. Some have already invested on hire-purchase schemes to obtain durables.
- Daily wage varies from Rs.300-500

## Appendix 3

### EXPERIENCES OF TSUNAMI

Leaders preferred to discuss about their experiences of Tsunami and it was encouraged in order to understand the level of involvement for them to be leaders.

#### Prior Awareness

On the whole, prior awareness of forthcoming Tsunami was very low. According to leaders of the East, the people were kept informed of a change of weather conditions. They expected something similar to the cyclone they experienced in 1978. Therefore the necessity to get ready was low, as it was unavoidable. Owing to the request of the authorities, the people were obliged to cut down trees to avoid damages to houses and they also tried to keep others informed. An attack from sea waves was far fetched.

People of the South were completely unaware of the Tsunami and it was highly unexpected. Even after seeing the first tidal wave, they associated it with '*vaarakan*' (monsoon), which according to the leaders are less harmful and people are quite used to.

*“We expected a monsoon. Kalmunai office informed us that there will be a change of weather conditions... we were told to cut down trees near houses ...there is a possibility of a 'sulisulan' (cyclone) ... we informed everybody and got them to cut the trees... we didn't expect the water to come from ground level... we thought it will rain and create harm” – East*

*“So on this day I was at home... my daughter said that she was going for work.... She works in a garment factory... she was getting ready and then we heard people saying 'muhuda godata enava' (sea water is coming to land)... I also didn't feel it that much as we are used to 'vaarakan' (monsoon) and water getting into our houses... it is not the first time...it is not a big thing for us. I looked out from the window and saw the tide but yet until it came into the house I did not realize that it is a strong tide....” South*

#### First Sight of Tsunami

The leaders commented that the day was similar to any other day. Few had noticed the roughness of the sea but have not expected it to be disastrous.

In the East the fisher-folk were out setting their fishing nets, farmers in their fields and the others involved in their respective activities. Leaders of the South viewed that the atmosphere in the South was somewhat different to a usual day as it was a holiday due to Poya and also being the day after Christmas. Thinking back they felt people were in a relaxed mood as it was not a day that one had to go to work. People were getting ready

for religious activities such as offering alms or being a Sunday, going to the weekly Sunday fair (pola). Some others were starting the day slower than usual or enjoying a peaceful chat with the family members. Unless there was a reason to go out, the majority preferred to be at home.

As mentioned earlier, even those who live in the vicinity of the sea noticed the difference of the tide but did not expect it to be so dangerous or rather not having experienced anything earlier associated with high tide. For some others the experience of the first tide was enough to realize its difference to any other day. Yet they did not expect a second and went about their normal activities. Some ran to the beach to see it better. Those who realized the danger avoided the area or looked for a means to escape; where they ran shouting ‘Sea is getting into the land’. But it was too late or too much to handle.

The leaders’ perspective was that those who live close the sea and those who lived away from the sea had two different experiences. Having seen the Tsunami to its full, they believed that each tide lasted for about 15 minutes. Once they got caught to the Tsunami they had to struggle trying to escape. They were of the view that Tsunami was too strong, the water was dirty and too rough to swim and escape.

*“Then the second tide came, and I saw it like a fume... Then people started running”  
- East*

*“When he came out he has seen black coloured sea water...it is thick water with sand and dirt... totally dirty. ...But he noticed the difference. That was all, the next moment he was caught in the tide” – East*

*”We saw people running excitedly. Then we saw that the sea was on the road... Then we saw another tide coming... it hit the bus and pushed it off to a lamp post” – South*

*“I looked out from the window and saw the tide but yet until it came into the house I did not realize that it was so strong.... Only when I went out I saw the tide – it was about 20 ft high... now there is nothing to do...before long I was in the tide for 45 minutes... fighting with the water... going up and down the tide... I cannot imagine that I am living” – South*

*“As people say it was not just sea water; it came together with sand, deep from within... carrying all the rubble around. So it was very hearting to fight with it” - South*

Those who lived away from the surrounding area realized the oncoming Tsunami only after the water reached their houses or when they heard people screaming, leaving them no time to think and act. According to comments, the water level varied depending on the distance, strength of tide and geographical location. They only knew that, if it was seawater the danger is unpredictable. Therefore, running for life was the only solution regardless of their belongings.

*“Some people were working in their fields... when people came shouting 'muhuda godata enwa' (sea is coming to the land) they couldn't believe how it could happen. So they were waiting without moving... even after seeing that these people were wet... then the second tide came much stronger... and they were all gone – East*

*“As I sat to read the newspaper I saw women on the road running saying, “muhuda goda galanewa, (sea water is coming to the land) I couldn't believe... I thought it is 'wada diya' (high tide) but “yet again they said it is not that. I had nothing else to do. By then the second tide was coming ... flowing like a snake... our house was about 350km away”  
- South*

*“Some people said that they saw the situation only when they heard people crying asking for help. By that time the water had come to waist level... So there was nothing but to run and get into a safe place” - South*

### **Reaction Thereafter**

Leaders believe that people seeking means to escape, was the most dreadful. Those who had sufficient time to think had run to the road to get into a vehicle or to the jungle or to a higher elevation to avoid the tide. Those who got caught to the tide had hung on to whatever they could, or climbed on to whatever strong surface that came their way. The ones who survived the Tsunami could not believe that they were among the living and commented that they had experienced death more than ever before.

Fighting with the tide some had even lost the clothes they were wearing. Immobilized, these people had been hiding until they got some assistance. The most unfortunate were those who missed all possibilities of escape and were not strong enough to fight the Tsunami.

*“So many lost everything.... Not even a thing to wear.... they were so helpless ... when they got back to their senses they realized that only the foundation of the houses was there” – South*

*“People screamed asking their children be taken away ...they were told to get into tall buildings... we also tried our best to get people to a safe place” – East*

*“One of the bridges was broken so we couldn't get to the other side. So we tried to walk across the river and that is how most of us got caught to the Tsunami” - East*

*“We were on a small tree until the water settled down.... It was not strong enough but I couldn't do anything... then we wanted to get to a safe place but there was no road even to reach there” – East*

*“My husband took the child next door... my father was hanging on to a tree and when my mother and I came out we were washed away.... Father came running to save mother.... They were both washed away... I got stuck on the wall and somebody came and took me upstairs.... First tide lasted for about 15 minutes... by then we couldn't find my parents.... we couldn't even find their bodies” - South*

*“I told my daughter to run away... by then the tide was over us..... my wife, daughter and myself were taken away by the sea. Water was all over, we were twisted around... and we didn't know where we were and we were not strong enough to swim with that tide” – South*

The discussion at this point moved on to discuss how the role of the leader emerged among the community. Those who had strength supported the others to lead them to churches, temples and schools. Some were not even alert to find a place to stay or to escape, but just followed the others. With the support of the security forces they started rescue operations. Their only concern was to save a life. The leaders regretted that they were inexperienced to handle a situation of this nature. Some leaders commented that they were unaware of what should be done with the dead bodies all over.

The support of the communities irrespective of caste, class, ethnicity etc. was a significant observation by the leaders. Otherwise, they would not have saved lives and/or prevented deaths in transit situations.

*“People had no idea about a second tide.... Just because one was running the others followed... So we all ran... the temple is on a hillock but I forgot about it... when people were running that way only I realized it.... So almost all the villagers were in the temple” – South*

*“Next moment all houses were flat...many dead... even the animals. Then we, together with the army started removing the corpses” - East*

*“Some worked very hard to save lives...Mangala is a boy in our area.... He saved 6 people on his own...and then a tree fell on him and he died. Then Kamalarathne, he was from the army and was able to save about 4-5 and then he got electrocuted” - South*

*“When we got out of the water only thing we heard was the noise of things breaking and people screaming. There was nothing for us to take.... I started looking for my daughter... then there were many bodies lying here and there... about 30-40 of them... I got them out.... Some of them were yet alive” - South*

*“When we searched we found 15 bodies... and we didn't know what to do... by about 12 they were smelling, but yet we decided to keep them. We wanted to leave them until the Grama Seveka came – East*

*“Subsequently, the people have been seeking help in numerous ways to find their families, friends, property and other essentials that they had lost. Some of the areas were not approachable either due to the high level of water, damaged roads and bridges...did not have the means to reach certain areas to carryout rescue operations” – South*

*“I didn’t see where my sister was taken. We found her body that evening. Only after one week I got to know that my husband was also dead” – South*

*“We felt sorry for the hard earned things. I didn’t think about them first, actually I thought my parents will be at least in a camp... then only I thought about the goods I had lost” - South*

Those who lived in the vicinity of the sea have lost almost everything, from the house to all its property, cultivations, vehicles, etc. They were totally traumatized by the devastation to go in search of anything and it took a while for them to realize the loss and the only place they have now is the camp.

## Appendix 4

### RELIEF OPERATION: Retrospection

Immediately after Tsunami the victims were without food or proper shelter. Village leaders, dignitaries (religious leaders, Grama Sevaka etc.) and the non-affected neighbours provided basic needs with makeshift facilities, even though it was not sufficient to cater to larger numbers. However, soon afterwards as a result of unprecedented relief operations the communities received relatively consistent assistance. The community leaders were thankful to the Government, religious leaders, NGOs, private organisation, individuals, international organizations, foreigners etc. for relief sent in varied forms.

### Relief and Allowances Received

In the process of the discussion the leaders mentioned the following as some of the relief received:

Cooked food, water and other beverages  
 Food – 10kg rice, flour, 100g Dhal, 1kg sugar, 1 bottle coconut oil (per week)  
 Dry rations worth Rs.150/- for six months  
 Utensils to clean up the area and houses  
 Tents  
 Mats, pillows, mosquito nets  
 Beds and mattresses  
 Sets of kitchen utensils  
 Clothes  
 Medicine  
 Medical assistance  
 Lanterns  
 Gas cylinder, cooker  
 Set of chairs  
 Dining tables  
 School bags, books, pens, pencils  
 Almirah/Large cupboards  
 Televisions  
 Cassette players  
 Radios  
 Bicycles  
 Sewing machines  
 Three-wheeler  
 Motor cycles/Scooters

In addition to relief, people also started receiving allowances from the government for day-to-day needs. These allowances are in addition to developmental allowances subsequently provided, which has been discussed earlier (See Section B, 2.2). Such assistance included:

- Food Stamps worth Rs.350
- Rs.200 for each member of the family from Samurdhi Bank
- Living allowance of Rs.5000 per month
- Loss of family member Rs.15000

The relief operation was received well by the community leaders in the context of unawareness of Tsunami in Sri Lanka.

## Appendix 5

Sunday Observer October 16<sup>th</sup> 2005

Tsunami belt: Buffer Zone contracts  
(The relevant Excerpts)

The Government has decided to revise the 100/200metre buffer zone implemented for the coastal belt of Tsunami affected areas following the 2004 December Tsunami devastations with immediate effect.

Under the new set of rules envisaged by the Government this buffer zone has been reduced to a range between 55-25 metres in the Southern Districts and 100-50 metres in the North East.

Soon after the Tsunami, Government declared a 100/200 metres strip of land as a 'no build zone' along the coastal belt of Sri Lanka. But District Secretaries and Divisional Secretaries had requested the Government to revise the buffer zone to accommodate special projects and those involved in fisheries related activities so that they can continue their livelihoods without much difficulty.

The 200 metre earlier buffer zone introduced in the districts of Ampara, Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Jaffna has been reduced up to a minimum of 50 metres.

## Appendix 6

Sunday Observer October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2005

Safety standards in building fishing craft vital: Makeshift boats cracks up at sea  
(The relevant Excerpts)

There are shocking experiences of fishing crafts built in Sri Lanka cracking up at sea due to inadequate thickness of the hull, FAO says. These fishing craft have been built at mushrooming boat-yards, following the Asian Tsunami of December last. “The safety standards for fishing boat construction and operation must be improved and applied to safeguard lives of Sri Lankan fishers”, FAO naval architect, Stefano Thermes said.

The situation is critical, for Sri Lanka is reputed for its high standard and efficiency in producing fibreglass boats of different types. This reputation comes from a few boatyards that built to international standards and export fishing craft to USA, Europe and Asian countries, in addition to luxury boats to the First World.

Sri Lanka’s damage to the fishing fleet following the Tsunami has now been put down to approximately \$36 million. FAO is assisting the Ministry of Fisheries to improve the quality of production of Sri Lankan boatyards through naval architect Stefano Thermes.

Sri Lanka’s national economy has been significantly affected with the loss to the Tsunami of around 76 per cent of Sri Lanka’s fishing craft. The fishing community in particular, also suffered from loss of protein by way of seafood harvest, Craig Williams of Architects Without Borders said.

Another effect of the Tsunami was the resulting damage to vast areas of the marine ecosystem, imperilling many fisheries.

For fisher-folk to sustain themselves economically, there is a great deal of pressure to fish as extensively and intensely as possible. The term “fishing it to death” has been experienced throughout the global marine ecosystem.

Statistics in Sri Lanka indicate that the fisheries surrounding the island must be carefully analysed for the sustainability of fishing activities with respect to a recovering marine ecosystem.

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